

Effectively Communicating the Gospel, Part 3 - Acts 26:9-11 – June 13th, 2010

- This is part three of a series titled; "Effectively Communicating the Gospel." Paul is standing trial before King Agrippa here in Caesarea.
- The Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit is an example to us in that he can teach us how to effectively communicate and present the Gospel.
- Here in chapter 26, he brilliantly and powerfully weaves the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ into how he himself came to Christ.
- It's important we understand, these are principles for effectively communicating the gospel as well as effectively communicating period.

9. Be very transparent (Verses 9-11)

9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

- v9 Paul tells Agrippa that like him, he too was convinced that it was up to him to do everything possible to oppose the name of Jesus.
- v10 Paul admits he did just that by persecuting and imprisoning many saints who were put to death because of his vote against them.
- v11 Paul then describes how he aggressively pursued and prosecuted Christians because he was obsessed in opposition against them.

- Now, at first glance, this may seem like too much personal information causing one to wonder why Paul would be led to disclose this.
- I would suggest to you that Paul is brilliantly leveling the playing field, so-to-speak, in that he is being very honest, and very transparent.
- The reason I say that is because of verse 9 where Paul says; "I too was convinced." In other words; Agrippa, I too was like you once."
- In other words, Paul is being very candid and very transparent by "becoming all things to all men that he might save some."

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. NIV

- There's something else here that can be easily missed as it relates to Paul being transparent about who he was and now who he is.
- Have you ever wondered why there's never a mention of the Apostle Paul's wife, or if Paul was ever even married in the first place?
- Some believe that he would have had to be married by virtue of his membership and vote in the Sanhedrin which he mentions in vs. 10.
- We see this when as a young Sanhedrin member then named Saul, he casts his vote to have Stephen killed for preaching the gospel.

Acts 7:54-60 54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. NIV

- This is why it's believed that at one time Paul would have had to be married in order to have been a member of the Sanhedrin.
- Be that as it may, it's clear that Paul later becomes single and we see this when he writes his first letter to the church in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 7:7-9 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. 8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. NIV

- So what happened to Paul's marriage? The thought is that after Paul came to Christ his wife either died, or disowned and deserted him.
- OK, so why do I bring this up, and what's my point, or better yet, do I even have a point? Yes, actually I do, and I'm glad you asked!
- Here's what I'm thinking: "Paul is being real." He knows that Agrippa knows all about Jewish customs and the Sanhedrin requirements.
- In other words, Paul is in effect relating to Agrippa who is sitting next to Bernice, discerning that she would likely desert him as well.
- I would like to close with a question; "Why is it so crucial that we be transparent?" Because in so doing we showcase God's grace.